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Woman's Union Missionary Society.

OUR GIRLS.

By JENNIE L. MUDGE.



FAMINE CHILDREN IN MARY AVERY MERRIMAN SCHOOL, CAWNPORE, INDIA



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OUR GIRLS.

By JENNIE L. MUDGE.

I N our Mary Avery Merriman Orphanage at Cawnpore there are 200 girls. A dreadful famine raged in a large part of India, and hundreds of children are given away by their parents, in order that they may be saved from starvation—and hundreds more are found whose parents have already died from lack of food. These children are sent to the different Orphanages scattered over the land, where they can be taken and cared for, and over seventy have been sent to us. Almost all of our girls have been famine children—and if you could have seen them when they came to us, and then see them now, you would scarcely believe them to be the same orphans. Many of the wee ones have had to be very carefully tended and fed on Mellen's food and milk, besides being rubbed with oil to keep the life in their little bodies. Our oldest girls are seventeen or eighteen, and then there are about a dozen little ones, three and five years old. Many of those children appear younger than they are, because their bodies have been stunted owing to their lack of nourishment.

Their Home is a large two-storied house, with many windows, so that they have an abundance of fresh air. Upstairs is the dormitory of the older girls, while the younger ones sleep in a room below, near the matron. The whole front of the building downstairs is used as a school room, and a dining room when it is too hot or too cold or too rainy to eat outside. The bed rooms are not just like yours, for upstairs there are no beds at all, only a comfortable spread on the floor for each girl, with her blanket as a cover in the cold weather.

The younger ones have low bedsteads, with a cotton rug or a mattress made of grass, with a sheet besides the blanket to roll themselves in. But I feel quite sure they sleep just as soundly as you do, on your spring beds, with more comfortable bedding.

Every day but Saturday, for five hours, all but the youngest are in school, and learn to read and write in Hindi, Urdu, and Roman Urdu. They learn to sew, and have a class in singing. I am sure you would enjoy hearing them sing, for they have good voices and sing with vim! In the summer their school begins at six o'clock in the morning, so you see they must rise early, in order to have their little breakfast before they go into school. Their real breakfast comes at eleven, or immediately after school, and their other meal, about five or six. All the natives in India sleep in most of their clothes, so it does not take our girls as long to dress in the morning as it does us.

The people in India are very particular about cleaning their teeth ; so if you were to visit the Orphanage some early morning, you might see a sight which would surprise you ! You would see all around the Compound, girls with black mouths and lips rubbing away at their teeth with their fingers, their only tooth-brush. This black substance is powdered charcoal, which makes the teeth white and is good for the gums. As a rule, our girls have teeth which any of us in America might envy.

You would be interested in being present at one of their meals, but I think perhaps you would not care to share it with them. They never sit at a table, but on the floor, or, if it is out-of-doors, on the clean-swept ground. They are arranged in rows, each with a white enamel plate before her, her only dish. The matron, with the great kettle of rice and one of a stew made of meat and vegetables, sits in front. Two of the older girls bring the plates to be filled, while two others carry around the great basket full of bread, which looks like large griddle cakes, and give each one or two cakes. When all are helped, at a signal from the matron, they rise and sing grace, then sit down, and, tearing in pieces the bread cake, dip up the rice and stew. They manage it all very deftly, the fingers not being soiled ! When all have finished, they sing their thanks, and each girl takes her plate to the water tap, and in turn, washes it ! This makes the work of dish washing an easy matter, you see.

At Christmas time, just before our two weeks' holiday, we have what we call *Distribution Day*, when the gifts sent out from America are distributed. Rewards are given also for faithfulness in study and for good conduct ; and then sweets are provided for them. The children always have recitations and singing, which are much enjoyed by the friends of the school, who are invited to share the good time. The gifts are not expensive ones, but doubtless give as much pleasure as your more costly ones do you. Bags made of pretty cretonne for their books, boxes for their slate and lead pencils, small mirrors, combs, pieces of soap and washcloths in a little bag, sewing bags with thimbles and scissors, or pieces of some serviceable print for a dress, are what we like for them. Perhaps you will be interested to make some of these things for our Distribution Day next year, and so have a share in the Christmas in India.

Another time that they look forward to is the picnic we always have for them. Large bullockcarts are engaged for the occasion, and the girls are stowed away in these and taken three or four miles to a grove, where the day is spent in playing games, jumping ropes, walking around and thoroughly enjoying the freedom from the usual life.

You would be interested in their Christian Endeavor Society, which meets every Wednesday night. You would perhaps be surprised to see how readily they repeat their passages of Scripture or lead in prayer. Even the little ones are always ready to take part. Some of our girls are real Christians, and

show by their lives that they are trying to live for Him who has called them out of the great heathen darkness which is all around them, into the light of the life they now live, where they hear every day of a Saviour who has redeemed them.

Miss Lillian E. Dietrich writes : Missionaries are realizing more and more that the very best work done to-day on the mission field is among the children. Especially is this true of those who, at an early age, are taken from their idolatrous and superstitious homes and surrounded by Christian influences and teaching, until they are fully established in the faith. It is very encouraging to us to see how quickly these girls seem to grasp the truths of Christianity, and what a hold it takes upon their young hearts. The religion of Jesus is a reality to the very youngest children in our Orphanage, and permeates their whole lives.

Fifty of our older girls are professed followers of Christ, thirty having publicly professed their faith this year by baptism.

The Mary Avery Merriman Orphanage was the outgrowth of a day school in Cawnpore. The recent famines which have desolated India made imperative the rescue of countless orphans who survived their parents. Thus the Orphanage became a necessity, and the work it accomplishes is second to none carried on by the WOMAN'S UNION MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

This organization is now in its 41st year, and has preserved its original characteristics, a union of evangelical Christianity, conducted by unsalaried officers. Cawnpore is its third station in India, in point of age, Calcutta, Allahabad being older and Jhansi its youngest. Zenana work is largely carried on, and to this evangelistic, educational and medical work has been the outgrowth.

The support of a child in the Orphanage is *twenty* dollars, a sum within the reach of almost all our Mission Bands. Who will choose one of these little ones, as an object of loving service and prayer?

OFFICERS OF THE WOMAN'S UNION MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

MRS. HENRY JOHNSON, *President.*

MISS S. D. DOREMUS, *Corresponding Secretary.*

MISS ELIZABETH B. STONE, *Assistant Treasurer.*